

Don't Break Just One Rule— Break 'Em All

By Ken Testorff,
Naval Safety Center

A 19-year-old Sailor leaves his ship in Norfolk at 1030 one Friday and drives 20 hours to visit family and friends about 1,300 miles away (65-mph average). He starts the return trip at 0700 two days later, with plans to arrive in Norfolk by midnight Sunday (76.5-mph average). See anything wrong with this picture? You should.

The problems started with a ship's instruction, which specifically limits driving for all hands to 350 miles per 24-hour period. Did the Sailor know about the instruction? Without a doubt because, if for no other reason, he had attended a shipwide safety stand-down just one month earlier. Motor-vehicle safety, safe driving, and the dangers of alcohol while driving were primary topics at that event.

In this case, the Sailor didn't tell anyone his travel plans before departure; didn't submit a leave request; and didn't fill out an ORM, travel, risk-assessment questionnaire. To make matters worse, he was fatigued when he left the ship.

Care to guess how this hare-brained scheme turned out? Just 20 minutes into the return trip, the Sailor had to swerve his 1999 Mitsubishi Diamante to avoid an object in the road. He subsequently lost control of the vehicle, and it went into a wet, grassy median, where it spun and flipped several times, ejecting the Sailor through the open sunroof.

In case you're wondering, he was wearing a seat belt, but, according to the mishap report, the "seat back was adjusted improperly, allowing the victim to come out of the seat belt." In other words, he probably had the seat in a "reclining" position. Perhaps he was trying to look "cool" or simply was

planning to get a little rest along the way—you know, drive with one eye open and the other one shut.

What happened to the victim? He lived to talk about his misadventure. However, he lost 11 work-days with internal bleeding, a contusion to his right arm, and a laceration to his right foot that required 14 stitches. Meanwhile, his vehicle was destroyed.

The National Safety Council has some advice that Sailors and Marines, alike, would do well to follow:

- ☛ Get seven to eight hours of sleep the night before a trip. Get enough rest, and don't start a trip late in the day. Long-distance driving is hard work, and you need to be fresh and alert.
- ☛ If possible, don't drive alone. Passengers can take turns driving and can serve as observation partners to keep you awake.
- ☛ Avoid long drives at night. The glare of lights, both on your dashboard and outside your car, increases the danger of highway hypnosis.
- ☛ Adjust your car's environment so it helps keep you awake. Keep the temperature cool, with windows open, or, in the summer, with air-conditioning. Don't use cruise control.
- ☛ Watch your posture. Drive with your head up and your shoulders back. Legs should not be fully extended.
- ☛ Take frequent breaks—at least once every two hours, take a 15-minute break. Get out of your car, walk around, and stretch. Exercise fights fatigue.
- ☛ Stop for light meals. Drink juice or water.
- ☛ Avoid eye fatigue during the day by wearing sunglasses to fight glare.



☛ If fatigued, find a motel or a safe, guarded, rest area and sleep.

Safe driving demands your full attention. If you feel tired, plan ahead for what you are going to do. The actions you take may not just help you stay awake; they might keep you alive. ☛

While on the subject of driving long distances, the sidebar that follows shows what a training command does for students before letting them head home for the holidays.—Ed.

Sub School Tunes Up for Holidays

With this year's holidays fast approaching, Sailors are anxious to prove there's no place like home to celebrate the yuletide season. Students at Submarine School, however, won't be getting on the roads for holiday leave until their cars have had a safety inspection.

These inspections are a "gift" from the Submarine School chief petty officers and the safety-office staff, working in conjunction with Submarine Base New London's Morale, Welfare and Recreation auto hobby shop and a local auto-parts supplier. Aimed at those Sailors driving home or at least a long distance from the base, the free inspections and low-cost repairs are available to Sub School staff and students, alike.

"We've had this [program] for a number of years," said FTC(SS) Christopher Dotson, organizer of last year's inspection teams. "In the past, we've had hundreds of students and staff members stop in and have us inspect their lights, hoses, tires, and what-have-you. Our emphasis was, and is, safety; it's what we call a 'common-sense safety check.'

